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ABSTRACT

A demonstration study was initiated under the auspices of the Department of Education, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, and designed to determine the interactive roles that can be undertaken by college, students in teacher training, the public school, and the community. To test the hypothesis that saturation field work would create new interactive roles, the research design manipulated the field work of a group of 38 teachers in training in order to saturate one school in a community under the close supervision of the college instructor. The five dimensions of field work which emerged from this study are: (1) training students (e.g., use of college instructor as demonstration teacher in the public school setting); (2) provision of services for public school pupils (e.g., use cf college students in home visits and in individual tutoring); (3) liaison between community and college (e.g., joint involvement of college students, college instructor, and community members as social change agents); (4) liaison between school and college (e.g., college instructor conducting inservice practicums according to expressed needs of teachers); and (5) frontiers of educational research (e.g., opportunity to recognize unresearched, yet urgent, problems in such areas as extortion, narcotics, and curricular relevance). The study was successful in providing an innovative pattern for field work in teacher education responsive to the recognition "that the public school classroom not the college lecture hall is the locus for effective teacher training." [Not available in hardcopy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (JES)

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DIMENSIONS OF FIELD WORK IN TEACHER EDUCATION

A DEMONSTRATION STUDY

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DIMENSIONS OF FIELD WORK IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A DEMONSTRATION STUDY

The new direction for teacher education is off-campus and schools of Education are in the process of decentralizing their programs as it becomes increasingly evident that the public school classroom and not the college lecture hall is the locus for effective teacher training.[1] The precise role of the teacher educator who moves out of the known quantity of the college structure into the unknown milieu of the public school and the community is unclear. What is clear is that a qualitative difference exists between the field work as integral part of total teacher education and the field work which is an essential part of student teacher supervision. Since the major goal of the latter experience is on-the-job training for the students, the college contact is diffused among many schools and superficial in its reciprocal relationship between the school and the college. A recent study examining the feasibility of a teacher training college for the Harlem community characterized these relationships as

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[1]Durrell, D.D. "Looking Ahead," Journal of Education, 151:3 (Feb., 1969), 4.

"random in character" and lacking a "structured approach by both teacher educators and personnel in the school system."[1]

In an effort to determine the interactive roles that could be undertaken by a college, the students in teacher training, the public school, and the community, a demonstration study was initiated in February 1969 under the auspices of the Department of Education, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. The purpose of the research was to examine the relationship between saturation field work where a group of thirty-eight teachers in training operated within one school under close supervision of their college instructor and the various interactive roles that would develop among the major participants in the study: the college, the public school, and the community. The hypothesis implicit in the study was that saturation field work by college students would create new interactive roles among the college, the public school, and the community.

The hypothesis was tested within a natural social setting, a public school, and as common with demonstration research, what the complex components of the natural setting failed to provide in empirical data is compensated for by producing an innovative action approach.[2]

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[1]Kreuter, Mortimer, "A New College for an Old Ghetto," Urban Review, 4:1 (Sept. 1969) 29.

[2]Thomas, E.J. "Field Experiments and Demonstrations," in Social Work Research. Ed. by N.A. Polansky. Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 291.

The five dimensions of field work in teacher education discussed in this article are an outgrowth of this study. Where specific reference is made to actual events that occurred during the demonstration study, the teacher educator will be designated as "Instructor Z" and the public school utilized in the experiment as the "target school." The use of the word "dimension" is intended to illustrate the point that the field work component in teacher education consists of a single experience with many aspects which are capable of describing the experience in the same way that solid bodies can be described by the dimensions of length, breadth, and width.[1] The five dimensions of field work in teacher education include the following activities: training students, providing services for public school pupils, serving as liaison between the college and the community, serving as liaison between the school and the college, and opening new frontiers for educational research.

Training Students to Teach

The research opened up several new areas within the dimension of teacher training. Among these were college instructor as demonstration teacher and the existance of

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[1]Black, Max. Labyrinth of Language. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968. p.110.

a common fund of school experiences upon which to base lectures and discussions in teacher training.

Training students in the field involves observation and participation. The observation may be one of two kinds: of other teachers within the public school or of the college instructor as demonstration teacher. The classroom observation may have as its focus curriculum content, subject methodology, philosophical or psychological approach, or other educational concerns. Since large numbers of observers are disturbing in a regular classroom situation, it was considered feasible to saturate the target school with a class of thirty-eight college students by apportioning a few students to each classroom. Since observation of the college instructor as demonstration teacher was valuable to college students and to the regular classroom teacher, Instructor Z taught a class of public school pupils for one period a week during which time the classroom teacher chose to remain in the room to observe new procedures demonstrated. The school pupils recognized this as established procedure for that particular day. During the period that Instructor Z taught, the college students were invited to observe and participate actively in the instructional process. There was constant communication among Instructor Z, the college students, and the classroom

teacher as to the purpose and implementation of the demonstration lesson. An evaluation followed each lesson.

An unanticipated consequence noted by a student participant in the study was the reinforcement for the college students who observed the demonstration lesson of the idea that scholarship intensified rather than diminished the fundamental teaching role of a college instructor.

Since the teacher educator had common contact with the pupils and teachers in the school where the students were observing, the discussions reviewing the weeks's experiences were specific. The shared experiences in the field provided concrete events upon which to base vital teacher training concepts. Authentic, concrete occurrences provided the basis upon which philosophical and theoretical concers were constructed and examined.

Providing Services for Public School Pupils

One of the largest single problems in the urban school today is reading retardation. Running a close second as the thorniest problem for teachers and pupils is the lack of services for the non-English speaking child. Large numbers of children require individualized aid in remedial mathematics, science, social studies, and modern languages. College bound youngsters need help preparing for special examinations. These services

and many others are largely neglected for the lack of available personnel. College students in training as teachers are able to render all of these services admirably. When asked to submit an evaluation of the experiences offered in an Education class, among which were lectures, guest speakers, classroom observations, working in small groups, and individual tutoring, the college students overwhelmingly judged tutoring as the single most valuable experience for teachers in training.[1]

It has further been suggested that the college students working in various parts of the school could be of assistance while learning about the school structure, the child, and the community. Attendance officers, unable to make home visits to a large number of truant pupils could use college students as aides for such visits. The school nurse, attempting to help a working parent unable to take a child for a dental or doctor's visit, can use a college student as a substitute parent. The extension of information gained in these ways about the child, his home and community, add a valuable dimension to the relationship that the teacher in training will have with the children. The relationship of teacher to pupil is enriched by a prior interaction which is individualized. It is anticipated that this will increase the understanding

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[1]Evaluation conducted on Dec. 9, 1969 at Brooklyn College, CUNY.

of social conditions and ethnic customs which are often enigmatic to a new teacher from a different social milieu.

In this time of educational crises, it is highly recommended that teacher education programs recognize the triple-edged weapon that they possess in this dimension of field work: services desperately needed by pupils are rendered by college students in fulfillment of course requirements; teachers in training are receiving the most practical introduction to the job of teaching under the careful supervision of a college instructor who supervises not from the distant lecture hall but close at hand in the field, and finally; the service component which the profession has come to expect of its practitioners is imbued at a pre-professional stage.

Liaison Between Community and College

New directions arose in this dimension of field work with the question of accountability. Is the college accountable for the solution of problems within its geographical area? Do instructors in a school of Education accept responsibility for maintaining standards of instruction within their community? This implies an activist approach to solutions rather than a traditional academic one which rejects the role of agent of social change. Can the college, the community, and the school keynote priorities and in joint partnership proceed to test several solutions? Towards this end, there are indications

that a reversal of academic priorities is in the offing. Throughout the United States, particularly in large urban areas, colleges have taken note of the decay into which the surrounding community has fallen. Many are in the process of redefining a role in the amelioration of the accelerating decay. This has resulted in a search for faculty for community-oriented colleges who view social action and community needs as the proper avenue to college career advancement rather than research and publication, although the two goals can well supplement each other.[1]

When a college instructor works with his students in the field, a general concern about the community evolves. Concern becomes involvement. When Instructor Z, working in the school, met parents and community members, they displayed their eagerness to assist the college program in every way possible. A request from the parents of the school to the Board of Education for a free chartered bus to transport the college students to and from the college to the public school was granted. For the college students, it was a vote of confidence from the community for services rendered to their children. A second indication of the significance of the college project

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[1]Kreuter, op. cit., p. 32.

to the community was an invitation from the School Community Board to Instructor Z inviting her to become the College member of their Board with full voting rights. A third tribute was a luncheon tendered by the parents of the school to the college and school faculty involved in the demonstration study. Bilingual invitations in English and Spanish were distributed to faculty and parents for the luncheon.

Several community members, aware of the innovative aspect of the school-college liaison served as guest lecturers in the college classroom. They spoke on topics which enlarged the student's understanding of the increasing desire of minority groups to have a determining voice in the education of their children. (Community members have been utilized previously as resource speakers in the college classroom and this did not occur as a new phenomena as a result of the field work experience.)

A by-product of the demonstration study as originally conceived by the college and the public school was an increasing recognition by the community that the college in their borough was meant to serve low income residents as well as the more affluent. College entrance, however, had never been a realistic goal for the members of this community. They were not aware of the various programs meant to serve their children or the adults in continuing education. Recognizing this, the college

students were instructed to converse with their pupils at all opportune moments about the borough college - asking questions and provoking interest in preparing for and attending college. The college students, in spite of their own personal disenchantment with the glamour of the college, were enthusiastic good will ambassadors for the goal of higher education.

Since the City University of New York is pledged to an open admissions policy for September 1970, low income residents of New York City high schools, previously unacceptable for college admission because of low academic standing, will be able to attend college and receive guidance and remedial services. It now becomes a challenge to inform residents of ghetto areas of these new opportunities for their children. College instructors, as members of school community boards or as guest speakers in their field schools can inform the community of the implications of the open admissions policy. It has been suggested that, "counseling, orientation and recruitment programs ought also to be extended to parent and community groups and ought to engage the services of CUNY students, faculty and alumni."[1]

One of the significant roles played by parents in schools is paraprofessional. As aides in reading laboratories, lunch

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[1]Rosner, Benjamin. "Open Admissions:A Challenge To Serve," Teacher Education, 21:1 (Oct.-Nov.1969) 3.

rooms, hallways, kindergartens, helping in situations with sick, troubled, or non-English speaking children, their role is increasingly significant. Many community persons involved with the schools glimpse, for the first time, a future career. How can the college advance such ambitions for low income residents, preparing them to acquire credentials as school personnel? Will special programs be devised so that recognition will be made of particular life experiences adults have which make the regular undergraduate program inappropriate for them? The college, particularly the teacher education department, has a new, developing role to play in innovating programs to suit the various needs of the adults and the needs of the schools. Multi-levels of careers, required to service the schools, need to be specified and training provided.

To summarize, the dimension of field work which opened up increasing opportunities for liaison between the college and the community was reflected in the joint role played by the college and community as agents of social change. Community members, observing the school-college liaison began to redefine their attitudes toward the college from latent hostility to an awareness of the service role the college was capable of rendering.

Liaison Between School and College

Teachers and other school personnel have always looked

to the college for further training in their profession. They come with pressing problems of curriculum, classroom discipline, school organization, or methodology. When the course they register for does not provide them with a solution for their problems, it is generally conceded that the course material was not geared specifically to their grade level or their type of school situation. It is incumbent upon the teacher to take the course material and try and adapt it to the particular situation. This can be done by many teachers but at times it cannot.

A teacher education program oriented to a field approach can devise a course to fulfill the specific needs of particular school personnel. The courses can originate from the needs of the teachers for further training rather than from a preconceived idea of what teachers require for further professional training. It is possible to offer courses as practicums within the field school. A special group of students kept for an hour past dismissal can serve as a basis for a practicum in "Diagnosis and Techniques of Remedial Reading." This can be given in a field school equipped with a reading laboratory and children serving for demonstration purposes.

In the target school, teachers were invited to observe the demonstration lessons given by the college instructor so that they could view new approaches utilized. All attempts were made to keep the teachers acquainted with the experimental

hypothesis so that they became interested and attuned to the research approach needed to seek solutions to educational problems.

The target school, in a slum area with difficult transportation, had made previous efforts to attract student teachers to its programs but with little reward. The Mathematics department, with a vigorous chairman, had tried for four years to obtain a trainee but to no avail. After five months of the demonstration study, two college students volunteered for student teaching assignments in the Math department. Moreover, twenty-five students who had previously reported negative opinions about working in junior high schools decided that the field experience had changed their opinions. They were now in favor of seeking job opportunities within the junior high or intermediate school.

Frontiers of Educational Research

A teacher educator in the field becomes an educational troubleshooter. He is expected to respond to problems in the public schools that have not yet reached the college campuses to become codified in course descriptions. These are problems now in existence that plague the children, the school personnel, and the parents and to which the colleges have not yet addressed themselves.

Such a problem is one of extortion. In schools throughout the city, older children are threatening younger ones. Money to be used for lunch or bus is taken away from children too frightened to report the offenders. There is an atmosphere of fear that is so pervasive that children and teen-agers fear to leave the school premises for there is no safety in the school yard or in the school park. Although this problem is rarely discussed in the research literature or in the Education courses, it is a major problem.

Narcotics in the public school has been largely neglected in teacher education and new teachers are not prepared to handle this problem. It is general knowledge that narcotics are bought, sold, and consumed in the bathrooms of many schools. The questionable method of attacking this situation is for school faculty to avoid investigating the situation, for police to be present at all times, or to keep bathrooom doors locked. Anyone acquainted with conditions in the schools recognizes the frequency with which youngsters are assaulted in the bathrooms because of the lack of supervision and the prevalence of narcotics. Another significant problem upon which general silence is serving as a substitute for action is the problem of narcotics addiction among the teaching staff.

These are only three of many problems which may not be central to educational concerns yet exert a powerful influence over the environment within which a teaching function can be

effective.

In field work, college instructors have the opportunity to judge whether the educational format which is advanced to the profession operates efficiently within the classroom. The complexities of policy in action become evident and necessitate constant revision of formulae. For instance, the formula states that Afro-American studies are relevant to today's children. The complexity arises when this formula is put into practice in an actual classroom. Within the target school, an average class has 25 children; 15 Puerto Rican, 5 Afro-American, 3 Chinese, and 2 Italian. The five Afro-American children were challenged by large amounts of Black studies but the Puerto Rican children noted the omission of Hispanic studies, failed to see the relevance to them of Black studies, and were hostile in the classroom. Such hostility was manifest by the destruction of bulletin boards displaying Afro-American materials. The Afro-American co-ordinator at the target school, sensitive to these problems, asked Instructor Z to request persons at the college with specialized knowledge to set up a study group for the development of materials useful for Hispanic studies on the junior high school level and to further develop a theory and practice of studying specific cultures within a multi-ethnic classroom.

Invited by the college students to address them in the college classroom, the Afro-American studies coordinator reviewed the significance of his field of study and invited them to jointly research new material urgently needed in his school. This induced several students to investigate special curriculum materials for their course projects. Unusual interest and enthusiasm were generated in the Afro-American and Hispanic studies area.

Summary of Research

The results of a demonstration study of field work in teacher education revealed five major dimensions: training students, providing services for public school pupils, serving as liaison between the college and the community, serving as liaison between the school and the college, and opening new frontiers for educational research. The research design minipulated the field work of a group of thiry-eight teachers in training in order to saturate one school in a community under close supervision of the college instructor.[1] This practice follows the classic pattern for demonstration research where a practitioner or administrator manipulates research variables for the purpose of achieving practical objectives.[2]

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[1]The author wishes to express her gratitude to Prof. Nathan Lefkowitz of Columbia University for his assistance in the research design.

[2]Polansky, op. cit., p. 290.

The hypothesis stated that the saturation field work would create new opportunities for interaction among the college, the public school, and the community. The hypothesis was confirmed and the various interactive roles described. The purpose of the demonstration was to evolve an innovative pattern for the field work component in teacher education. The dimensions derived from the study are indicative of beginning relationships and with continued application of the demonstration pattern it is anticipated that the five dimensions will be enlarged and perhaps new dimensions created.